8138
5

A LETTER, directed to the Honourable Robert Harley, Esq; Speaker to the Honourable House of Commons, relating to the great Abuses of the Nation.

SIR,

HAving such a Worthy Person in the Chair, I thought it not amiss to Inform your Honour of some Ill Practices too common used in this our Age and Nation, hoping the Honourable House will find out ways to suppress it for the future; (*viz.*) I happ'ned last Week in company of one who is now Clark to a Brewer in this City, who amongst other Discourse, told me that the Brew-house to which he belonged, had several false Backs and Tuns, undiscovered, *&c.* And that he has paid some Gaugers weekly Wages as duly as any Servant they had, some 10, 20, 30*s. per* Week; and some of the Gaugers that wou'd not be bribed, they have watched their Beer out of their Brew-house, and finding in near double the quantity by them gauged, have made Complaint, but on Tryal have been cast, by reason the Victuallers where the Beer has been carried in, (being deep in Debt to the Brewer) have sworn that the Barrel came in but half full, and the Gauger not swearing they was full, Might has overcome Right, and the Gaugers became a scoff to all Brewers and False Officers, who ne'er left off False Accusations against them, till they have lifted them out of their places: by which it plainly appears that the Revenue is much lessened, and all honest Men obliged to be False to their Trust, or starve; this I take to be matter of Fact. For my self, sometime since lived with a Brewer, and often when we have brewed twice a Week, the Brewer and Gauger has shared the *Excise* of one Brewing between 'em. But it may be objected, Why did not I Inform, and have the Reward? To which I answer, That I acted for a Friend *gratis*, and to have Informed against him, I shou'd not only been scoft at, but have hazarded my Life, tho' I had a good-will to it, but was perswaded that if I did, the Gauger wou'd have Murdered me, they being generally made up of Lewd Men, and Soldiers: To prevent which Abuses for the future, I can't think of a better way than Farming the *Excise*, which its thought wou'd be of great Advantage to the Publick; for it plainly appears by what I have inserted, that by the Corruption of the Officers, a one Third Part of the Duty is to the Officers and Brewers, which Inriches them, and Impoverishes our Government; for the Confirmation of which it plainly appears by Loans

given falling ſhort, and the Brewers getting ſuch vaſt Eſtates in few Years; and by a Gauger that has but 50*l.* *per Annum* Sallery, to keep a Houſe, Wife, three or four Children, a Man, a Maid, and a Horſe to ride a Hunting three or four Days in a Week, as many to my knowledge in that imploy has, and do, having nothing but their bare 50 *l.* Sallery; all which is really Matter of Fact.

Likewiſe, the ſame Abuſes are daily Committed by the Cuſtom-houſe Officers, which has been a great denyal to Trade, and an incouragement to the Running of Goods: for many a young Merchant has been diſ-incouraged in their firſt on-ſet of Merchandizing, for I know a young Gentleman of my Acquaintance, that deſired to Merchandize, but on his firſt entring out of Goods, they made him pay 13 *s.* for Fees, where he ſhould have paid but 7 *s.* 6 *d.* And on his Importing his Returns, made him pay more, beſides 4 *s.* 6 *d.* for a little parcel of Goods carrying into the King's Ware-houſe, and lying there five Houſes, on which Abuſes he fully reſolved, (by the Bleſſing of God) to keep his Money in his Cheſt, and live private, he being a Perſon of great Fortune, and known Principles, that abhors Bribery and Unjuſt Dealing; tho' the old Merchants are well verſt in it; for a Friend of his told him, that if he would give a Fee and a ſmall Treat now and then, he might gain by Merchandizing as well as himſelf and others, and for want of which skill (as he called it) many a Young Merchant is undone before he has any inſight how others get Money; for the Cuſtom Duties, and what they are overcharged, (which they ſave) is the Breaking of others that pay it; who endeavours to ſell after their Prices; which is the Cauſe, as I ſaid before, that ſo much Goods are daily Run, and thereby the Duty leſſened; for ſeveral young Merchants, and Maſters of Veſſels, think it's by Running of Goods that others get by Trading; whilſt they are ſtill in the Dark, and by Running of Goods many a young Trader is undone, tho' the fault lies all the while in perjured Officers. In ſhort, the Ill Practices daily uſed by the Cuſtom-houſe Officers is a great Scandal to our Nation, and the Name of the *Cuſtom-houſe* of *England* ſtinks in all foreign parts. But it may be objected, Why Information or Complaint is not made of theſe and the like Abuſes? To which it's anſwer'd, as in the Caſe before, that Might overcomes Right. But put the caſe a man does make Complaint to the Commiſſioners, and (by chance) has redreſs (as a Friend of mine not long ſince had) but the next time he had Goods on the Wharf, the Officers tumbled and dirted it (under pretence of prohibited Goods put up with it) that he had better given them ten times the Money they over-charged him before; this is matter of Fact, and to prevent the like Abuſes for the future, (and diſ-incourage the Running of Goods) it's thought it wou'd be much better if it was Farmed out, or that each Officer had a Table hanging over his Head of his Office and particular Fees; as likewiſe each Officers Fees on each Wharf or Key, or at leaſt thoſe that have Salleries to have no Fees at all; the Wharfs and Keys being maintained out of the publick Stock, *&c.*

Hear-

Hearing your Honour's have Bills now in the House concerning the Militia, Deputy-Lieutenants and Justices of the Peace, I hope it may not be amiss, if I insert some Corruptions that I have seen and heard of them; and first as to the Militia, one thing would be very needful, that there was a Set-Pay for all Horse and Foot in the Militia, and that each Man and Horse be Listed, and not altered without the consent of the Deputy-Lieutenants, who should meet four times in the Year for that purpose; and that no Vintner, Innholder, or Victualler, *&c.* bear any Office in the Militia, for the ill consequence of which plainly appears by the decay of all the *Artillery-Grounds* belonging to this City, for since those Callings are so vastly increased, and so many made Officers, especially in this City, that of latter days, instead of exercising the Pike and Musket in the Field, it's turned into a Bottle and Glas within Doors; and he that can exercise that best, shall have a Commission, and though at the same time he does scarce know a Pike from a Musket, or at least a Fire-Lock from a Match-Lock; this is Matter of Fact; and to prevent which for the future, it would be proper that a Law was made, That no Vintner, Inholder, Victualler, or Coffee-house-keeper, *&c.* be capable of an Office in the Militia; for its plainly they encourage their Soldiers under them in Vice and Debauchery, instead of Military Discipline: And that no Person be capable of an Office in the Militia of this City and Suburbs, unless he be a Member of one or more of the *Artillery-Gardens* within the same, and has paid ——Entrance, and ——*per* Quarter towards the Maintaining of Arms, Amunition, Servants, *&c.* and belonging to the same. It wou'd likewise be very necessary that none be made an Officer but what has been actually a Member 12 Months in one of the said Artillery Gardens; for many by Friendship, or being a good Pot-Companion, are made Officers, altho' they scarce know the Right-Hand from the Left, which is a great denyal to Military Discipline, *&c.*

It wou'd be a great Encouragement of Military Discipline, if there was a Law made for all Youth, in all Cities and Towns, (with leave from the chief Magistrate) to beat Drum and Exercise Arms on *Shrove-Tuesday*, *King's Coronation*-Day, *Fifth of November*, &c. instead of Throwing at Cocks, Ninepinns, Tippling and Drinking, *&c.* which would much strengthen our Nation against a foreign Enemy, and put a great stop to Vice and Immorality, *&c.*

And as to Justices of the Peace, and Deputy-Lieutenants, it may be said as before, of Military Officers, he that can Exercise the Bottle and Glass best, *&c.* shall have a Commission, altho' no parts, Principle, or Estate, worthy of that Honour, and some of them living such Prophane, Loose Lives, that instead of working Reformation in others, they incourage Vice and Debauchery. As for Instance, six Men of this City went to *Woolidge*, last Week to see the Royal Soveraign, and some of them being in Drink, and coming home, they pretended themselves Press-Masters, and stop'd all they met; at length the Press-Masters themselves met with them, and would have Press'd them, on which they had hot Words, if not Blows, but it being near *Debtford*, they wou'd go before a Justice of Peace;

and

and before a Juſtice (one Capt. W——) they went, (who was not at home, but at a Taveru) and one of the Company coming before him with his Hat on, the Juſtices ſtrikes him with his Hand in the Face, and bids him pull off his Hat. He Anſwered, He would not. On which the Juſtice ſwore an Oath or two, and gave him another ſlap in the Face, which made his Noſe bleed; at which the Party ſwore at the Juſtice. In ſhort, the Preſs-Maſters not finding they was like to have any good of 'em, ſwore an Aſſault againſt two of them which was Drunk, on which they went their way, the Juſtice on further Examination, required Money for their Swearing, and being Drunk, (tho' its thought he Swore two Oaths to their one) and find Sureties, or to *Maidſtone*-Goal they muſt go; the reſt being ſober and civil, and all Houſekeepers in this City, the Juſtice (ſo called) diſcharged them: However, the four not willing to leave their two Companions, called for Wine, on which the Juſtice bid 'em ſit down in Company with him. So at length, by drinking one Health, and anothers Health, they prevailed with the Juſtice, that their two Companions ſhould be freed, by begging Pardonon their Knees, and pay 5 *s.* each for Sweaaing and being Drunk: But having a Bottle or two more they prevail'd ſo far, that by begging Pardon on their Knees, they ſhould be Diſcharg'd, which they did; and calling for the Reckoning, the Juſtice paid his 18 *d.* all They their 12 *d. per* Man; and it being about 2 or 3 in the Morning, they parted. This Information I had from one of the Company, and I believe it to be all Matter of Fact; and therefore, How is it poſſible to have any Reformation of Manners in this Nation, unleſs the Honourable Houſe do Reform theſe, and the like Crying Sins of our Land? For whilſt thoſe in Offices and Places of Truſt are ſo Corrupted. It's no wonder thoſe good and wholſome Laws you make, are no better obſerv'd and obey'd; neither is it for want of Trade that we Complain ſo much, but for the ill Government in Trade; for it's thought we have more Money, Trade and Buſineſs, *&c.* in this Nation than ever; but for want of good Management as formerly, makes all People uneaſie: As for inſtance, if a Man deals but for the value of one Shilling, it muſt be Concluded on in a Tavern, Ale-houſe, or Coffee-houſe, *&c.* Where on both ſides, in buying and Selling, each Man's profit is gone in Idle Expence; for ſince we have had ſo many new ſorts of Liquors, and ſo great a number of Publick Houſes to Trade, in our great Complaint of Trading has been; for a Dealer hot only ſpends his Profit, which ſhould be for the Maintaing of his Family, but looſe ſo much of his precious Time, as in former Days was imploy'd in reading the Scriptures, or ſome other Godly Book: So that it wou'd be neceſſary, that a Tax was laid on all Publick-Houſes; for they at preſent have the only Trade of this Nation——, or at leaſt make a Law to make all Bargens void, that ſhall be wholly Contracted at the Hours of *Change*, till near the *Exchange*; for it plainly appears, by what I have inſerted, that a Pot-Companoin, in the whole and ſole Foundation of all our Corruptions in this our Age & Nation. I could ſay a great deal more on each Head, but this may give you ſome Light in theſe Cauſes, why Vice and Immorality do ſo much abound, and our Government continue ſo in Debt, and why ſome particular Perſons get ſuch vaſt Eſtates in ſo little a Time. Pardon my Boldneſs, and Excuſe me for not Signing my Name, which I wholly omitted, fearing it might be known to ſome Perſons, it was me that madd known their Secrets, and thereby hazard my Life; therefore ſhall Subſcribe my ſelf

England's Well-wiſher.

London,
May the 3*d.* 1701.

5 IE 54

F I N I S.

5